Concept Note

Event on the second anniversary of the resolution

Date: November 6, 2023
Time: 10:00 – 11:30 am NY time
Co-hosts: The Permanent Missions of Colombia, Malta, Nigeria, Norway, and Switzerland to the United Nations in New York, UNESCO, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict
Location: In person in UNHQ CR 5 and livestreamed

I. Background:

On 29 October 2021, the UN Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted Resolution 2601 on the protection of education during conflict – the first resolution of this body dealing specifically with protecting education. Co-sponsored by 99 countries, the resolution showed a high level of political will to safeguard, protect, respect, and promote the right to education, including in armed conflict. The resolution condemns attacks against, and the military use of, schools, in contravention of international humanitarian law. It urges Member States to create domestic legal frameworks that include comprehensive measures to prevent attacks and protect schools, children, and teachers, and to take steps to address girls’ access to education, as well as to provide inclusive and accessible assistance to children with disabilities and continuing access to education for refugee and internally displaced children.

Since it was opened to endorsement in May 2015, 118 states have already committed to protecting education in armed conflict by endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration and the number continues to grow. The UNSC Resolution 2601 complements the Declaration. It acknowledges efforts made by Member States to implement the Declaration and provides all States—regardless of their endorsement of the Declaration—with a framework to address attacks on education and the military use of educational facilities.

Teaching and learning have become increasingly dangerous in the past few years, with the lives of students, teachers, and academics frequently put at risk. GCPEA identified more than 3,000 attacks on education in 2022, which represents a 17 percent increase over the previous year. More than 6,700 students and educators were reportedly killed, injured, abducted, arrested, or otherwise harmed in attacks on education in 2022, an increase of 20 percent compared to 2021, according to GCPEA research. Military use of schools also rose in 2022, with over 500 cases reported. The UN Secretary-General’s 2023 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, released in June 2023, also spotlighted the increase in attacks against schools by 112 percent, noting that State armed forces were the most prevalent perpetrators of such attacks.

It is critical that world leaders take swift steps to operationalise Resolution 2601 and guarantee safe education for all. UNSC Resolution 2601 (2021) creates momentum for strengthening international and domestic standards for better protection of education in conflict. The State-
led Implementation Network on the Safe Schools Declaration offers a unique platform to take stock of progress made since the adoption of the resolution and discuss next steps for its implementation.

II. Objectives:

Participants to the event will:

❖ Understand the key provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2601, their implications for UN Member States on protecting education during conflict and the link with the Safe Schools Declaration;
❖ Learn about examples of implementation of the resolution and the gender dimensions of attacks on education and schools;
❖ Discuss how the resolution can effectively be implemented and have an impact on the ground; and
❖ Explore how Resolution 2601 can serve as a good practice that can be applied or replicated by international and regional human rights mechanisms to mainstream the protection of education in conflict into their work.

III. Draft program:

● Welcome
  H.E. Ambassador Adrian Hauri, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

● Presenting UN SCR 2601
  H.E. Ambassador Andreas Løvold, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations
  Ms. Halimatou Hima Moussa Dioula, Senior Fragility Specialist (ETC), Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV) Group – Coastal West Africa. World Bank Regional Office

● Implementing UN SCR 2601
  H.E. Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad Bande, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations
  Ms. Dragica Mikavica, Programme Officer, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict
  Mr. Ernesto Granillo, Humanitarian Advocacy and Policy Specialist, UNICEF
  Ms. Bethany Ellis, Senior Advocacy Officer, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict

● Challenges and next steps for furthering implementation
  H.E. Ambassador Leonor Zalabata Torres, Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations
  Ms. Lily Gray, Senior Liaison Officer in the UNESCO Office in New York
  Ms. Emilia Sorrentino, Education in Emergencies Global Lead, Plan International

● Conclusions
  H.E. Ambassador Vanessa Frazier, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations

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1 The State-led Implementation Network on the Safe Schools Declaration promotes cooperation and peer-to-peer exchange of experiences and good practice between states that have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. The Network was launched by the Government of Norway in October 2021, during the Fourth International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration held in Abuja, Nigeria.